

A
Consolatory Letter
 UPON THE
DEATH
 OF A
DAUGHTER.

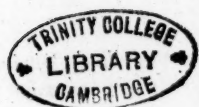
Written after a Philosophical Manner,
 By a Gentleman of the University,
 to his Friend in the Country.

*O Præclarum Diem, cum ad illud Divinorum Animorum
 Concilium cætumq; proficiscar, cùmque ex hac turbâ &
 collusione discedam!* Cic. de Senect.

*Nostra quæ dicitur vita Mors est, nec unquam vivit Animus,
 nisi compage solutus corporis. Liber aternitate potiat.*

Id. de Consolat.

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A
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 UPON THE
DEATH of a DAUGHTER.

My Dear Friend,

NOT only our Education, and the common Course of our Studies for many Years, but much more the inward Frame and Agreement of Minds, have by a secret Sympathy drawn our Souls into the sacred Tye of a firm and inviolable Friendship; and I should dishonour and highly derogate from that Divine Vertue, if I did not as well participate in your Sorrows, as share in your Felicity.

When the last Post brought me the unfortunate News of the Death of your beloved *Placidia*, I was equally concerned with your self for her immature Fate: And because I find your great Sorrow makes you incapable of giving your self that relief which you have frequently bestowed upon others, from those several Arguments, that both Religion and Philosophy furnish us withal; suffer me at least now to refresh your disconsolate Mind with some of those Topicks, which (when sequestred from the Noise and Tumult of the World, and locked in the pleasing Union of each others Soul) we were wont to entertain our selves with upon such Spectacles of Mortality; which I shall set down in a loose manner, not being over-curious in ranking them in a distinct Order and Method.

The *Platonists* suppose the Descent of Humane Souls into Terrestrial Bodies, not to be equal and alike in all: For as there were some who let themselves loose without bounds or measures, to all the irregular and exorbitant Motions of their congenite Bodies, and in whom the *Plastick* Life became so infinitely invigorated, as quite to suppress and silence that better Principle, to whose Inspirations while they carefully attended, they remained happy in the free Exertions of a higher and more intellectual Life: And, by this means, taking their full swinge, and drowning themselves in Corporeal Joys, they became perfectly unfit for any other degree of Vitality, but the Terrestrial, and must have lain in a State of Inactivity for ever, had not a Gracious Providence sent them down upon Earth to try their Fortunes once more: So there are others, who descended indeed somewhat from the height and summity of the *Aethereal* Life, and experienced the Joys and Pleasures of the lower Life; yet still within such bounds and limits, as did not utterly incapacitate them for a Return, but thereby they contracted a nearer Aptitude and Fitnes of actuating a Terrestrial Body. Now as the first of these are observed in these their Earthly Bodies to have a strong Proclivity to Vice, and are carried headlong to all manner of Gratifications of Sense, be they never so feculent and coarse, in spight of all better Perswasions to the contrary, and are very hardly and difficultly reclaimed: So the other coming into the World with a good Measure of that Divine Life, still awakened in them; notwithstanding the Encumbrances of Flesh and Blood, they make more easie Returns, and more happily recover that Blessed Life (to which they have a Congruity yet remaining) upon their Departure from their Mortal Bodies.

And if this Hypothesis of theirs be true, your *Placidia* may well be thought to be one of this latter sort, there appearing even in her blooming Years such an Angelical Temper, which discovered it self in a quick and lively Sense of Goodness, a firm and radicated Love of Vertue, of Sanctity and Purity, of Innocency and a hearty Benignity, Kindness, and Readiness of Mind, to do all the good Offices she could to all the World. And for you now to bewail her Death, it is to be sorry for her Return to the Possession of that blessed Life, the full

full Enjoyment of which was greatly interrupted by her stay and continuance in this her Earthly Prison. And the Scripture seems to call the Departure of a Holy Soul from its Earthly Tenement, by the Name of a Return, as *Phil.* 1. 23.

— *having a desire, εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι, to depart, but is more fitly rendred to return, viz. to a Man's own House, or Native Home, as the Word is used, Luke 12. 36.* And to this may be imputed her hasty flight from this Earthly Region, it being a merciful Providence to her, that that Divine Life, which shone so bright through the Veil of Mortality, might not be in danger to be extinguished and oppressed by a longer Continuance under the weight and pressure of sluggish and dull Flesh and Blood.

Give me leave farther to repeat (not as if you were ignorant of it, but that I may attempt something to break and dispel that Cloud of Sorrow which seems to sit heavy upon your Brows) what the Divine *Plato* tells us, that true Philosophy is nothing but *κλέψι θανάτου*, a Meditation of Death; *i. e.* the Separation of the Soul from its close adhesion to the Body, that in that abstracted and silent State, it might more freely contemplate Truth, and the bright *Idea's* of the incorporeal World. And there is great Reason for this: For (as the same contemplative Philosopher informs us) when the Body, with all its Train of Lusts and Affections, shall by a kind of Magical Devocation draw the Animadversion after it, the Mind is filled with a kind of Tumult, and struck with Amazement, *ὥστε μὴ δυνάσθαι ὑπ' αὐτῆς καθορᾶν τὰ ἄληθῆ*; and, by this means is rendred unable and incapable to discern the Face of Truth.

Wherefore he that would philosophize aright, and attain the Height and Perfection of Humane Nature, must learn to die to the Body, and separate himself from all Contagion of the Animal Life, and have no farther Communication with it than pure Necessity requires. For this Disjunction and Separation of the Soul from Sense and Corporeity, is a Prelude to her Immortality, and the raising her from this obscure Life she leads in the Body, to a Capacity of conversing with the Root and Centre of all Life in more pure and defecate Regions.

And now in this Philosophy, *Placidia* was an excellent and early Proficient, having rarely well learned the Art of subjugating all Corporeal Motions, Affections, and Desires, to the *Imperium*, and Rule of the Intellectual Life; never suffering any youthful Pleasures or Delights, to betray her to an Action of Ignominy or Shame; but using such innocent Diversions, as only served for the unbending and Relaxation of the Mind for a while, that it might return with fresh Alacrity and Vigour to a press Observance of the great End of her Creation. She never was taken with any of those Fooleries and secular Vanities, with which her Sex is the most easily betrayed, chusing rather a becoming Neatness than affected Curiosity in her Dress; and spending that Time in her Closet, and the secret Retirements between God and her own Soul, which others would more vainly consume, *inter pectinem & speculum*. Nor ought you to wonder to see your *Placidia* in such a Philosophical Garb, while she endeavoured after that, which you and I labour for, and which is not only the Top and Summit of *Platonism*, but of *Christian Philosophy* it self. For what else is this dying to the Animal and Corporeal Life in *Platonism*, but only the *Christian* Mortification of all our Earthly Lusts and Passions? Or what other, is the raising of the Soul to behold and unite with that First and Original Pulchritude, but in the *Christian* Dialect, a Participation of the Divine Nature? And can you now over-lament, that Death hath perfected that ἀφαιρέσις or χωρισμός τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος, Separation or Sejunction of the Soul from the Body, which *Placidia* herself had so happily begun? Especially, when you consider that by this practical Meditation, she daily made Death familiar to her, and by dressing up afore-hand her Soul for Immortality, verified what in the constant course of her Sickness she would frequently say, that *she was not afraid to die*, nor disturbed at the Name or Thoughts of that King of Terrors, having already become dead to all the Blandishments and Inecations of Sense, and, by an early Piety shown her self only alive to God and Vertue. For doubtless nothing more fatally threatens the utter Extinction of the Diviner Powers of the Soul, and takes away all Care of a Future State, than the luxuriant growth of the Animal Life. And therefore those that ad-
dict

dict themselves wholly to Sensuality, they do (as *Cicero* *De Conso-*
lat. speaks) *stertere potius quam ullo pacto vivere*, *snort rather than*
any way live; or more fully, according to the Apostle, *they* *1 Tim. 5 6.*
are dead while they live; that State only being worthy to be
 called Life, when the Soul is united to, and made one with the
 Divine Nature.

Moreover, if you look upon Death in a Physical Sence,
 you shall find it only the Consopition, or laying asleep of
 some Faculties, that others may awake and act in their
 stead. And when the Terrestrial Congruity is either natu-
 rally unwound, or violently broken asunder, another and
 more large Capacity and Degree of Life immediately a-
 wakes. For, questionless, the Soul of Man was made by the
 eternal Wisdom, with a Capacity of being united with some
 other Matter beside Flesh and Blood, as not only the Hea-
 venly Body promised us at the Resurrection, but the Place
 of our Habitation and Abode do evidently declare. And
 that between Death and the Resurrection, she should be ut-
 terly stript and unbarred of all Matter, is hard to conceive,
 especially when both the Nature of the Thing it self, and
 the Stories of Apparitions in all Ages so fairly invite us to
 think that an Aereal or Æthereal Body will naturally fall
 to her share, so soon as she hath quitted the Terrestri-
 al. So that there is no fear of any ones being lost, or that
 all Life is extinguished upon the Death of the Body; but a
 higher Power, which has indeed been laid asleep in this
 Earthly Body, takes its turn, and the Soul is so much the
 more happy, by how much larger that Sphere of Life is into
 which she is awakened by her Disunion from the Terrestrial
 Body.

To go out of this Body, is for the Soul to ascend, to go
 forward, to disspread herself, and to have larger Faculties;
 but to descend, is to go backward, and to pinion herself,
 and fall into the most inert and sluggish Life of all. Hence
 the learned *Origen* doubted not to say, Ἀρχὴ δυνάμεως ἡ ἐπι-
 γινώσκουσα, that our Terrestrial Nativity is really the be-
 ginning of Death: Because when we come into these Bodies,
 our nobler Faculties are then contracted and laid asleep,
 and we sink down from a better and freer to a worse and
 narrower State of Life. This was it which made that Royal
 Prophet

- Psal.* 120. Prophet bemoan himself, *Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesect*, which the *Septuagint* thus renders — *ὅτι παρεστία με ἐξαναγύει*, *that my Pilgrimage is prolonged*; intimating that in this Earthly Body, he was in a foreign Country, and at a vast distance from his Native home. And it was the weight and pressure of this cadaverous Body, that made
- Rom.* 7.24. *St. Paul* cry out, *O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me*, *ἐν τῷ σώματι τῷ θανάτῳ τούτῳ*, *from this Body of Death*! And lest we should think that this was spoken out of a sudden Fit of Discontent, upon the Labours and Troubles he had and did daily undergo, he positively affirms, that *me*
- 2 Cor.* 5.4. *that are in this Tabernacle do groan being burdened*; namely, with the weight of our Earthly Bodies. Here it is that the Soul is denied the sight of that Eternal Pulchritude, which she once saw with open Face, but now converses with it as it were in a Dream, and the Obscurity of a Nocturnal Vision, beholding but a glimpse of it through the Crannies of Mortality; partly because the Place of her Abode, and the Condition of her Life mix'd with the various Inquinations of Earth, distract her Attention from that lovely Spectacle. For that uniform Beauty descending from above, must needs appear less, and change its Nature, when fallen among the foul Embraces and Twinings of Terrestrial Joys: Like a River emptying its Channel into the brackish Sea, retains a while its sweet Waters; but when the rude Winds and Waves assault their weaker Force, they are soon swallowed up, and lose both their Name and Nature in the Bosom of their more potent Adversary. Thus it is with us in our Earthly Bodies; but when we are set at liberty, and delivered from these Jails, we enter upon a State of a more enlarged Life, and new Scenes of Things present themselves to our View, and our Souls begin to find their Wings to grow again, whereby they soar aloft in the undisturbed Mansions of Blessedness, where their Faces are never turned from that Intellectual Sun that shines with uninterrupted Beams upon them.

Think with your self now, Sir, that if departed Souls know any thing that is done here below, and it were permitted to *Placidia* to give you a Visit, whether she would

not

not meekly, and with a Filial Affection, desire you to put a stop to your Sorrow, and let you know that the blessed *Genii* have other Apprehensions of Things than we poor Mortals have, and call them by other Names: What we call Death, they term Life; and when we say we celebrate the Funerals of our Friends, the Inhabitants of the upper World, call it their *Natalitia* or *Birth-days*, and therefore that you would not take her departure from you so heavily, since it was the joyfullest Day that ever she saw before.

Thus the *Indian Brachmans* philosophized, affirming the Life of Man to be like the State of the *Fœtus* in the Womb, τὸν δὲ θάνατον, γένειν ἐς τὸν ὄντα βίον καὶ τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν, and Death to be the Birth to Life truly so called, to a Life of Peace and Quietness in the happy Receptacles and Mansions of Spirits, where the bright Day is never intercepted by Clouds and Darkness, but an eternal Serenity overspreads the whole Face of Heaven. Nay, the barbarous *Thracians* and *Scythians*, were not altogether estranged from this piece of Ancient Wisdom, *Valerius Maximus* reporting of them, that they used Feastings and publick Rejoicings at the Funerals of their Friends, because they believed that when they died, their Souls were released from the troublesome Circumstances of a calamitous Life, and passed into more happy and blessed Regions. You see then, my Friend, what little Cause you have to bewail the Death and Abreption of your dear *Placidia* from you, who is not lost, but taken into a higher Place and Degree in the City of the Great King. The Bird of Paradise is uncag'd, that she may take her flight to her Native Land. She is gone to all her Friends, Relations, and Acquaintance, that went hence in the Fear of God, and the Exercise of a good Conscience, who no doubt but met her with Joy and Triumph, and after the unspeakable way that separate Souls discourse, congratulated her safe Arrival to the Society of blessed Spirits; which is thus set forth by the Oracle, when consulted touching the Soul of *Plotinus*, and its passage to the Happy State:

*Ad Cætum jam venis abnum
 Heroum blandis spirantem leniter auris :
 Hæc ubi amicitia est, ubi molli fronte Cupido
 Lætitia replens liquidâ, pariterq; repletus
 Semper ab Ambrosiis fœcundo è Numine rivis.
 Unde serena quies castorum & dulcis amorum
 Illecebra ac placidi suavissima flamina Venti.*

Which I find thus Englished :

*And now you're come to th' Happy Quire
 Of Heroes where their blessed Souls retire,
 Where softest Winds do as soft Joys inspire :
 Here dwells chaste Friendship with so pure a Flame,
 That Love knows no Satiety or Shame,
 But gives and takes new Joys, and yet is still the same.
 Th' Ambrosian Fountains with fresh Pleasures spring,
 And gentle Zephyrus does new Odours bring.
 These Gifts for inoffensive Ease are lent,
 And both conspire to make Love innocent.*

If it were a mighty Pleasure to Socrates to think, that when he left the Body, he should go to *Æacus* and *Minos*, to *Orpheus* and *Musæus*, and all those Holy Souls, that fill and make up the Chorus of Immortal Love: What enravishing Joy? What pleasing Emotions of Spirit should it beget in you, to be assured that *Placidia* is gone to *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, to the Holy Prophets and Apostles, and to all that have done good in their Generations; but, above all, to *Jesus*, who loved and redeemed her with his own Blood?

I know it is a common Argument, and frequently made use of upon such Occasions as this, to tell you that she is removed from all those Evils a Terrestrial Body is obnoxious to; yet hath it great Truth and Weight in the Consideration of it. For though the Days of Man upon Earth be few, and his Life contracted into a narrower space than in the first Ages of the World when Nature was in her youthful Gaiety, yet they are full of Misery and Calamity, and every Act of

Life

Life is divided into many Scenes of Sorrow. We begin our Days with weeping, and the first Tribute we pay to the Light of the Sun, is to present him with a Tear and watry Eyes, as a sure Prefage of our future Misery. And if we outlive the Chances of Childhood, and arrive to the Exercise of our discriminative Faculties, and make our choice of that variety of Instances the World presents unto us, we go from a less to a greater degree of Affliction. For whereas before we could only grieve and sigh under a present Pain, now our Grief is redoubled by reflecting on it, and we are the more miserable by knowing that we are so. Those very Diseases that carry a little Infant with quietness to its Grave, force us into effeminate Ejulations and Impatience; and all because our Apprehensions and Reflexive Acts are greater than a Childs. Should we view Man in his declining State, when his Sun is setting and leaving the *Horizon* of Time, and we shall find old Age like a teeming Womb, full of Miseries and Sorrows; a rough and uneven Path, wherein Death becomes a welcome Respite and breathing Place, to recover our Spirits wearied with the Troubles of this Life, and inables us to resume our progress to Immortality. In a word, corroding Cares, disappointments of our Hopes and Expectations, Crosses, and doleful Circumstances, Sickneses and Diseases, make up the sum of Humane Life. Besides this, when a good Person reflects upon the Depravity and Wickedness of the World, the stench whereof is ready to choak him, he is sensibly pained, and cannot but testify his inward Grief by his Tears. But now Death removes him from all the Objects of his Dislike and Aversion, and the Grave puts an end to all Humane Miseries: *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest; There the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor.* And as for Moral Evils, there is an end to them likewise: For holy Souls are out of the reach of the sly Tempter, nor can the crooked Serpent wind himself again into the Celestial Paradise.

But after all, it is not my Meaning nor Design to persuade you to an *ἀσέπεια*, or putting off natural Affection; nor by a Stoical Stubbornness of Mind to become insensible of your Affliction. For the better any Man is, the more passive is his

Constitution either for Joy or Grief, and the more subject to these harmless Passions; ἀγαθοὶ ἀειδόμενοι ἀνδρες, the best and most Heroical Persons are the readiest upon a sad Accident to overflow with Tears. Thus the Son of God shew'd the tenderness of his Spirit at the Grave of *Lazarus*, and could not withhold his Tears, — *Jesus wept.*

Nor would I have you to forget *Placidia*, and cast her Image quite out of you Mind, as the manner of too many is, who when they have interr'd the Bodies of their Friends, and the Solemnity is over, think themselves no more concerned in them, than if they had never been: For both Nature and Religion allow us to remember them, with all that Esteem and Honour that is due to superior Beings, whom the Lord of the Universe has grac'd with signal Marks of his Favour in the Regions of Paradise.

Whenever therefore you admit her into your Thoughts, let it not be as she was in her earthly Tabernacle, with all those Disadvantages and Alterations that Death made in it, when he was pulling it down; but rather represent her to your self in those bright Robes in which she converses with blessed Spirits, where the external Shape faithfully answers the inward Pulchritude of the Soul, and the yielding Matter is framed according to the beautiful *Idea* presented by the Mind to the *Plastick* Life. Here are the living Rays of Virtue, which if it ever could be visible to the Eye, must be discovered in the lovely Countenances and graceful Motions of these Holy Souls. This was it which made *Cato* in *Tully's* Book of *Senectute*, as if he had seen something already of the State of those Immortal *Genii*, so desirous to hasten to them; *O præclarum diem cum ad illud Divinum Animorum concilium, catumq; proficiscar, cumq; ex hac turbâ & colluvione discedam!* O glorious day, when I shall go to the great Assembly of blessed Souls, and be delivered from this Crowd, and that Dungeon

De consolat.
har.

wherein I live! And *Cicero* elsewhere tells us, that nothing was more pleasant to him, than (when he considered and contemplated the future State of the Soul) to be confident and assured of the eternal and happy State of his Daughter. And if this were so to him, who lived upon the strength of naked and thin Reason, what should it be to us, who have as sensible
and

and palpable a Demonstration of the Souls future Felicity as can be desired, in the Resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Saviour? With what Transports of Joy should we meet our approaching Fate, when we are leaving this Region of Malediction, wherein our Souls are entomb'd in our Bodies? And when we ascend to those Immortal Mansions, where our Joy is never interrupted by any Cloud of Sorrow, where Love is without any Dissimulation or Lust; and where all is Life and Happiness for evermore? And truly it seems evident to me, that *Placidia* had some Prelibations of this glorious State, which vigorously possessed her Soul, even in the very last moment of her Life, when opening her Eyes that were more than half o'ercast and clouded with the Shadow of Death, and looking upon her mourning Relations, with a chearful Smile, she took her last Farewel of them and all the World. When all other Powers and Faculties of the bodily Life were fallen asleep, this she left as the only Testimony then remaining of that exalted sense she had of those Heavenly Pleasures she was going to enjoy. Here it was indeed that she excell'd her self, and here show'd the Gallantry of her intemperate Youth, and how far true Vertue and Religion will prevail above all earthly Things.

There is a certain Greatness in the mind of Man, which Christianity came not to extinguish, but to confirm and advance, by better Arguments than the choicest *Ethnick* Philosophy could ever furnish us withal, whereby a Man is carried out in an even Calmness of Spirit, not only to achieve great Things, but to a noble sufferance, and a Will purely conformable to the Will of Heaven in the most calamitous Accidents, and such as the most nearly touch a Man's self, under a full assurance that all Things are ordered by a benign and righteous Providence, which as it sorts all Beings according to the previous Dispositions of their Minds, so takes the most particular Care of vertuous Souls. And if a Person may, (as there is no doubt of it) double the Providence of Heaven in this Life, by the constant and sincere Practice of Religion and Vertue; your poor *Placidia* went not away from hence, without a double Guardiance, it being
doubtful,

doubtful, whether Goodness were more her choice than inspired into her, *ἐκείνη ὁλοκαύστη*, by a divine Fate (as the *Platonists* speak) which as it conducted her into this World for the Trial of her Vertues, so carried her off happily to obtain the great *ἀποδομή*, Reward of all her Labours and Contentions, from a Judge as kind and merciful as just. Which of all Things in the World ought not only to allay your Grief, but administer a mighty occasion of rejoicing, in being under God the Author of the Life and Being of so happy a Creature that is now gone to the blessed Regions of Holy and Immortal Spirits.

Indeed if there were an utter extinction and going out of Being when we die, or that our Souls slept with their Bodies in the cold Clods of the Earth, then I know not whether we should have Tears enough left to bewail our Children, whom an unkind Fate bereaves us of in the Flower of their Years. But both these proceeding from dark Melancholy, and a too fond love of these earthly Bodies, can make no Impression upon a truly Religious and Philosophical Spirit, who would sooner endure the tearing of his Limbs asunder, than suffer such heavy and cold Conceits to entomb his Mind.

I shall not go about to prove the Immortality of the Soul from Philosophical Principles, since you know very well where it is treated of in that kind on purpose, but only affirm that the contrary overthrows the whole Design of Religion; which way of arguing I shall briefly touch upon, not knowing but this Letter may come into less skilful hands than your own. *If in this Life only we have hope in Christ,* (says the Apostle) *we are of all Men most miserable:* If all the Advantages we reap from the Gospel are terminated in this Life, and our hope of future Happiness end with our few and evil days, we that are Christians are the most unhappy Persons, the most proper Objects of Compassion in the World. To what end or purpose came the Gospel? Or was it the Design of that everlasting Goodness, which is so plentifully diffused and spread over the whole Creation, to make our short Life a continued Act of Calamity and Sorrow? Can Heaven's righteous Ruler take pleasure in betraying the

the innocent Credulity of the most harmless Men in the World? Shall the wicked live by Rapine and Injustice, and freely enjoy whatever Pleasure their Natures are capable of, and shall only Vertue and Righteousness be the unhappy Objects of Misery and Affliction? If this be the Order of that eternal Justice which rules and governs the World, sure Goodness, Righteousness, and Equity are but idle Names, and 'tis our Fancies that have made the distinction between Good and Evil. How much more blessed are they who never heard the sound of the Gospel, or having heard it, stopt their Ears against those alluring Charms, than those that have lived in a faithful Obedience to it, and waded even through a Sea of Blood to their long expected Joy, and are at last deprived of it? The *Epicurean* Doctrine, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; let us take our Portion of good things while we are here, and live jovially, for this is our Portion, and our Lot is this; were both noble and pleasant, if this were true, that our Spirits vanished like the fleeting Air when we depart this Life. But our Hopes are grounded upon a deep and firm Foundation; for if we believe there is such a Being as God in the World, any Providence presiding over the Affairs of Mankind, his Veracity and Truth will secure our future State. For he having so universally declared to all Men by the Voice of Nature, but more fully by Christianity, the Immortality and Personal Subsistence of the Soul after Death, it would lie as an eternal Blot upon this most precious Attribute, if there were really no such thing to be expected. Nor is the Justice of God less concerned in this Affair, a great part of which consists in a faithful Distribution of Rewards and Punishments; all which were utterly lost, unless the souls of Men subsist after Death, and be capable of Pleasure and Pain.

And as for that extravagant Dream, that the Soul sleeps with the Body in the Grave till the Day of the Resurrection, I am bold to say, That Sensuality is the Patroness of this heartless Opinion. The Nature of the Soul of Man is such, as makes it capable of Moral Good and Evil; and for this Reason, every Man fatally adjoyning himself either to Heaven or Hell in this Life, it will inevitably fall to his share to be Hap-

py or Miserable when departed out of it: Which cannot be, except the Memory and Sense of his past Actions return, upon his Separation from the Body: And that it does so, is not only a probable, but necessary Consequence from the Nature of the Soul. Now the Pleasure and Pain resulting from Good and Evil Actions, will not suffer the Soul to fall into such a Stupour and Lethargick Sleep. God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living; *for all live unto him*, said our Lord. But if the Souls of Men fall into so permanent a Sleep, they are dead, or rather annihilated (for not to Be, and not to be conscious of ones Being, are much one) and their Recuperation to Life, is to them as it were a new Creation, neither know they why they are either Rewarded or Punished, because Death and that Narcotick State which immediately follows it (according to this sottish Fancy) washes away the Memory of all past Actions whatever. To this we may add the Apparition of *Moses* and *Elias* in their Celestial Robes to our Blessed Saviour at his Transfiguration upon *Mount Tabor*, when his Face shone like the Sun, and his Rayment became white as the Light, and those two Divine Personages foretold the good Events of his Death, and spake words of comfort to him under the Consideration of his Inglorious Passion: Which is an evident proof that the Souls of *Moses* and *Elias* did not sleep when they left their Bodies, but that they now live and act in the Felicities of Jesus, to whom, in the days of his Flesh, they brought Relief and Comfort. Nor can I see how the Soul of the Thief on the Cross could be with our Saviour in Paradise, or if it were there, what advantage it could reap, if immediately upon its separation from the Body, it fell into such a deep sleep as not to be awakened but by the sound of the last Trumpet. And as little Reason can be given why the Apostles Affections should be carry'd out in such a longing desire to depart and to be with Christ, if to be with Christ were to sleep till the Day of Judgment, in the cold Sods of the Earth.

But to pass on to some other Considerations, one or other of which may perchance be as *a Word spoken in Season*, and prove subservient for the reviving a languishing and sorrowful Spirit. Do we not see all Things in Nature hasten to

a Decay? The hoary Winter cuts off all the Summer's Pride and Glory, and Trees and Herbs despoiled of their green and leavy Coverings lie as dead, till the return of the Sun, and the genital Heat of Nature, raise them to a new and fresh Life again. Are not Beasts, and Fowls, and Fishes, and the whole Animal Kingdom, in a perpetual Mutation and Succession? Nay, the Heavenly Bodies themselves are not exempted from Mortality and Corruption, as is evidently seen in the appearing of new Stars, unknown before, and the sudden disappearing of old ones, and in the Trajection of Comets those vast and ominous Bodies through the Skirts of the Sun's *Vortex* above the Orb of *Saturn*. The Sun himself, the common *Focus*, that imparts Life and Heat to so many Worlds which keep their constant Circulations about him, yet seems to prognosticate his own Death and Extinction, by those *Maculae* or Spots carried around his Face. And can you think a tender Body of Flesh and Blood, though *fearfully and wonderfully made*, yet consisting of mortal Principles, should not die and perish? But though Death may prey upon, and consume the Elements of our Terrestrial Composition, yet the Soul remains safe and entire; and when clothed upon with her Heavenly and Angelical Body, will be perfectly out of the reach of Fate, and secure in the Possession of that bright and glorious Life, which is justly said to be eternal.

But you will say, *Placidia* was taken away in the Flower of her Youth, and you are bereaved of the Comfort of your Old Age. 'I acknowledge, indeed, that Children are one of the greatest Temporal Blessings Men are capable of in this Life; and therefore the being deprived of them, is one of the greatest Temporal Infelicities. They are so many Images of our selves, and by them we are in a fort kept from the devouring Jaws of Silence and Forgetfulness, and have a kind of Immortality imparted to us in this World. In them is contained the straitest and nearest Bond of Friendship, and they are the greatest Comfort and Support of our Old Age. All living Creatures seem to acknowledge something of this Pleasure and Sweetness in bringing up their Young Ones. But what then? Is the loss of them

an Evil never to be redrest? Is it a Wound that is beyond all possibility of a Cure? To send a Child in a Voyage to the remotest part of the *Indies*, from whence perhaps he may never return, is carried off more lightly than to follow him to his Grave; when yet to my Apprehension there is no such great difference, but what is made by a weak and impotent Imagination. For though we see not our departed Friends with our bodily Eyes, yet they, and we, and those Pure and Majestick Beings, the Angels, under God the Supreme Monarch, make one Polity, Society, or Corporation, that extends and reaches from Heaven to Earth; and the distance is no more, than that they, according to their several Ranks and Qualities, live above in the splendid and more Noble Buildings, and we in the Suburbs, the meanest and lowest Places of the City of the Great King. In my

- Joh. 14.2.* Father's House are many Mansions, says Christ. And the Author to the Hebrews seems to intimate as much; But ye
Heb. 12. are come unto Mount Zion, and to the City of the Living God, the
 23. Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the General Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect. For what is it that makes a City or Society but this? 1. That there be some Head or Supreme. 2. That they be all governed by the same Laws. 3. That they all drive on the same common Design for the Publick Good. And such is the Nature and Constitution of this Celestial Polity; forasmuch as the Angels, and virtuous Souls, and good Men upon Earth, have all one Supreme Head and Governor, even Jesus Christ, the Sovereign Lord of the whole Creation. And their Laws are exactly and perfectly the same, being nothing but the eternal Sanctions of Righteousness, Truth, and Goodness; and hence we desire a perfect Correspondence with the Angelical Pattern in our Obedience to the Will of God, that it may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. And lastly, they all unite and join in the carrying on, and promoting the same Great Interest and Design; namely, the Diffusion and Communication of the Blessed Life and Nature of God to all capable Subjects. So that it is only our false Apprehensions of Things,

Things, that creates all the Evil and Affliction of our Minds.
 And if we would take Things by the right handle, and consider the various circumstances of Life and Death, as they are in themselves, and unmix'd with our vain Fancies of them, we might free our selves from a very great part of our Misery and Trouble: As is excellently well represented by the Muse of that incomparably learned Person, Dr. H. More, at the end of his Philosophical Poems.

*Where's now the Object of thy Fears,
 Needle's Sighs and fruitless Tears?
 They be all gone like idle Dream,
 Suggested by the Body's Steam.
 O Cave of Horror, black as Pitch!
 Dark Den of Spectres, that bewitch
 The weak'n'd Fancy, sore affright
 With the grim Shades of grisly Night.
 What's Plague and Prison? Loss of Friends?
 War, Dearth, and Death, that all Things ends?
 After Bugbears for the Childish Mind,
 Pure panick Terrors of the blind.
 Collect thy Soul into one Sphere
 Of Light, and 'bove the Earth it rear.
 Those wild scatter'd Thoughts, that erst
 Lay loosely in the World dispers'd,
 Call in: Thy Spirit thus knit in one
 Fair lucid Orb; those Fears be gone
 Like vain Impostures of the Night;
 That fly before the Morning bright.
 Then, with pure Eyes, thou shalt behold
 How the first Goodness doth enfold
 All Things in loving tender Arms:
 That deemed Mischiefs are no Harms,
 But sovereign Salves; and skilful cures
 Of greater Woes the World endures;
 That Man's stout Soul may win a State
 Far rais'd above the reach of Fate.*

Say now that your Daughter was taken away in her Youth, and the Prime of her Years; yet ought not this to be accounted any harm or detriment, but rather to be reckoned a Blessing, according to that common Proverb,

*Nam quem tuerur, atq; diligit Deus,
Juvenis Supremum Mortiserrat limitem.*

To this Sence,

*Whom God encircles with his Love,
He takes in Youth to Joys above.*

For Youth is commonly more intempered and unspotted, and free from those Vices and Temptations that older Age is obnoxious to. The Soul is then more Divine, and its Affections more united with that eternal Pulchritude, that irradiates holy Minds, than when it is distracted with the Cares of the World, or sunk into the Love of Riches, earthly Pleasures, and the vain Affectation of Honours, the usual Baits of elder Years. Besides, you know not but it might be a merciful Provision of a benign Providence to her, not only to be delivered from the Snares and Temptations of an untoward World, but that she might not participate of those Miseries and Calamities to which a longer continuance might have expos'd her. Hence (if we give Credit to the Poets) it was reckoned as a Blessing of the Gods to *Hercules* and *Achilles*, that they were both taken away in the full strength and vigour both of their Bodies and Minds. And happy doubtless are they, who neither constrained by the defects of Nature, and the Fatigues of old Age, nor yet broken with Miseries, and weary of living; but part with this World, though in their juvenile Years, with a sedate and composed Mind, devolving themselves wholly upon that eternal Providence, which assuredly acts and does all Things always for the best.

And yet if we calculate Things aright, the Account of Life is not to be taken by the number of Years, but from the Time that has been spent in adorning and perfecting the Mind

Mind in Virtue and Goodness. And a Person may truly be said to have lived a great while in a few Years. *Cardan* reports of one *Similis*, who ordered this to be engraven on his Tomb, *Here lies Similis, who was a great many Years old, but had lived only seven*; accounting that only Life which had been spent in Virtue; thus many Men die before they begin to live. For certainly it is the most miserable thing in the World, to live to all others, and not to live at all to one's self; that Life being not to be called ours, which is not some way or other laid out in the benefiting of the Mind. *Aristotle* says that at the River *Hypanis*, there are a sort of little Animals which live but one day, being born with the rising Sun, and dying with his setting Beams. Upon which *Tully* thus discourses, *Confer nostram longissimam aetatem, &c. i. e. do but compare our longest Age with Eternity, and we shall be found almost in the same brevity with those little Creatures.* From whence he excellently infers, that therefore we ought to overlook all these Fooleries, and place the whole sum of a good Life in the Strength and Greatness of our Minds, in a contempt and undervaluing of Humane Things, and in the prosecution of Virtue.

Now as to that other part of being a comfort and support to Old Age that is coming on, there is none that knew the Sweetness of *Placidia's* Temper, and that tender affection she bare to you, but will easily be satisfied that nothing which were in her Power should have been wanting to you; yet how far that might extend, being utterly unknown through the Lubricities and Contingencies of Humane Life, had her Days been protracted, and she had been only in capacity to have afforded Assistance either to your Infirmities or Calamities, by her compassionate Tears and Prayers, this must needs have added considerably to a present Affliction. But he that considers that the *very hairs of our Heads are all numbred*; and that a Sparrow closes not its Wings on Earth, but the watchful Eye of Heaven observes its Fall; and that an Almighty and Beneficent Providence interposes in all Humane Affairs, and passes through all things, clothing the Flowers of the Field with exquisiteness and variety of Beauty, and providing for the Fowls of the Air, must conclude that no Man

is

is neglected of Heaven's Care, but he that first falls short in the Exercise of his Duty. And he that is bereaved of one Comfort, upon the making good use of such a sorrowful Accident, is commonly blessed with a double return of Kindness some other way.

But because the Importunity of your Disaster calls more than ordinarily for assistance; and since I began with some Platonical Considerations, I shall conclude this Letter with something from thence to our present purpose. *Ireneus* L. 2. c. 65. hath these Words, *Plenissime autem Dominus docuit, &c.* i. e. Our Lord hath most plainly taught us, that Souls do not only continue after Death, but likewise that they remember the Actions and Omissions of their Life past. And in the following Chapter, he says, that they have a humane Figure or Shape whereby they may be known, as also that they remember the things here upon Earth. There is no doubt then, but *Placidia* still bears a filial respect for you, and is ready to assist you by what ways she can, that is, by her Prayers. For Memory being a radiated Faculty of the Soul, remains entire even after her Separation from the Body: And the memory of all the Transactions in this Life reviving in the next, her Goodness and Piety cannot make her forgetful of those she has left behind her here on Earth, but rather earnestly desirous they may partake of the same Felicity she enjoys. For the having experienced the pressure, uneasiness, and misery, that attends our earthly State, will be a very powerful Inducement to assist those that yet labour under the burden of it. And this perhaps may be one Reason of that officious Solicitousness of *Raphael* (if there may be any stress laid upon that *Apothryphat Book*) for the Concerns of *Tobit* and his Son, who though called an Angel, yet was indeed the Soul of *Azarias* the Son of *Ananias* the Great, and of *Tobit's* Brethren, as we find, *Tobit* Chap. 5. 12. And, to this purpose, *Josephus* introduces *Abraham* telling his Son, whom he was just going to sacrifice, that he should be to him *εὐχόμενος καὶ παρακάλειν*, to take care of his Affairs, and comfort his Old Age; which I cannot see any other way he should do, than by his Prayers to the Great God for his Aged Father. Accordingly

Maxi-

Maximus Tyrius will have the Soul, when ascribed into the number of Heavenly Citizens, which live under just and righteous Laws, and enjoy a perpetual Peace, yet in the mid'st of her Joys commiserate and pity those she has left behind, and, as far as may be, assist weak and frail Mortality. *Dissert.* 27.

I may now suggest to you in the last place, what *Tully* does upon a like Occasion to his Friend *Tiberius*, *Quod allatura est ipsa Diuturnitas, &c. i. e. What length of Time will do, which brings a Lenitive, and takes off the greatest Sorrows, that we ought to anticipate and prevent by prudent Counsel.* For (as he goes on) if there be no Woman of so weak a mind, but after having lost her Children, will some time or other make an end of mourning; surely then a Philosopher ought not to expect that Cure and Relief from Time, which his own Reason may suggest to him, and furnish him withal.

And if now to comfort and raise your dejected Mind, I have opened a Box of Spices to embalm and consecrate your *Placidia's* Memory to Posterity, it is but a just Due to her Vertues, and a part of the Friendship I owe to you, who am,

S I R,

Yours, &c.

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